

LETTER FROM CARTER CONLON

Dear Friend,

I hope these newsletters have been and will continue to be a source of encouragement to you. The prophet Malachi, foreseeing what I believe to be our day, said: *"Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon His name"* (Malachi 3:16).

We need to pray for each other. Please remember us in your times with the Lord, as we will you. None of us are able to make this journey on our own. I want you to know that we honestly care, and every request you send to us is brought before the congregation in intercession during the Tuesday night services. We ask Jesus to give you the strength you need in a way that only His name will be glorified.

The **tscnyc.org** Website now has a section "For Pastors Only." If you are a pastor or know some who might benefit from short and encouraging devotionals, please let them know they can register; they will be notified as the video segments are posted.

Blessings 'til next time.

Yours in Christ,



Carter Conlon
Senior Pastor

UNDERSTANDING THE SORROW OF CHRIST

by Carter Conlon

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:3). Isaiah is writing prophetically about Jesus Christ. It is interesting that in his description he doesn't say, "...a man of victory, a man of power, a man of presence"—all the things that God rightly is. Instead, what he saw in the spirit was a man who was a friend of inner, personal grief.

Why did God reveal Himself to Isaiah as "a Man of sorrows"? The book of Genesis says that in the cool of the evening, God was walking in the Garden of Eden. In the original Hebrew text, the word "walking" has a context of pacing. It is like a father whose son or daughter is late getting home. He knows that his child has been up to no good, and he is just hoping that the child is going to come clean rather than create a phony covering for what has really been going on.

God was speaking as a father when He came down into the Garden and asked, "Adam, where are you?" This was not just a casual question—as if God did not know where Adam was. It was God calling out to His son, knowing that he had disobeyed and touched what he should not have. God knew at this point that death was entering not only Adam's life and his wife Eve's, but all the subsequent

offspring down through the ages—the millions of people that would be born into the world.

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God saw it all in a moment of time. He knew what the sin of disobedience had done. He understood the death and devastation that had been unleashed upon the entire human race, which henceforth would be born with the tendency to sin. Have you ever noticed that you don't have to teach your child to be selfish, or to lie, or to say "no"? Instead, you have to teach the opposite, for there is a sin nature in every child born into this world. God saw this loss—one greater than anything you or I could ever comprehend.

You may have lost a child, a family member, or somebody in your life very important to you; if so, you have tasted sorrow. You would like to forget those feelings, but they still come back from time to time. Now multiply that by six billion. Try to get an understanding of what came into the heart of God that day when He saw what happened to His people who had been created in His own image for fellowship with Him.

■ SORROW THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPTURES

What is this sorrow in the heart of God, and what does it look like in the Scriptures? Consider Luke 4:18–21, when Jesus got up in the temple and opened His heart to His own fallen creation. *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”* In other words, Jesus was saying, “I am here, I have come—the Messiah, the Son of God. I have come into your midst to open the treasure of heaven to those who are living in poverty. I have come to give deliverance to the captives. And the good news is that this is the day of it; it is now! Anyone who wants freedom can have it!”

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Think about the sorrow that must have entered the heart of Jesus as He ministered in the temple. The people He was speaking to failed to recognize their own peril. In abject poverty at every level, they were outside of the kingdom of God not only for time but for eternity. They didn’t merely fail to recognize the love of God, they both rejected it and violently resisted it. The Scripture says the whole crowd

rose up in anger at the very manifestation of the love of God, even to the point of taking Jesus to throw Him off the brow of a hill. They desired to kill Him right at that moment—the Son of God, who came for the sins of the world!

Of course they did not succeed, and Scripture even says that Jesus just walked right through the midst of them and went His way. But what do you think was in His heart? He must have walked away with a measure of sorrow, having come unto His own, only to be rejected. He had come to them for good and not for evil; for healing and not for punishment; for deliverance and not for imprisonment. He came to bestow everything that God intended for those who had lost their position with Him due to sin. And they wanted to kill Him for it!

■ A RIGHTEOUS ANGER

“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:12–13). Here we see another manifestation of sorrow—a righteous anger. As Jesus walked in the temple, He witnessed a religious system abusing His children. The priests who were supposed to be bringing the people to Him for healing instead were profiting from their struggles. They set up booths where they sold goats, doves and sheep, having discovered a lucrative business ministering to the failures of the people.

So Jesus came in and, as one of the Gospels describes, He made a scourge of cords. All the while a deep sorrow was in His heart, for the temple was intended as a place for

people to meet God and find Him as the One they had been looking for all along. And Jesus was seeing a religious system rob the people of that relationship with God.

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The Scripture says He overturned the tables, threw out the doves, and cast out the sellers of goats, because they had made His Father’s house “a den of thieves.” After He threw everything out, verse 14 tells us that *“the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.”* That’s what it’s supposed to be all about. That’s why people gather today in churches. If they don’t see a way out, they should find that Jesus is there to show them the way. They should find Him there to heal, to open their eyes, to give them a new heart and the ability to get out of sin. Yet, how much in the Church today remains to be overturned by the hand of God?

■ JESUS WEPT

“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept” (John 11:33–35).

Jesus had spent a good deal of time in Lazarus’ house with his family, particularly his two sisters, Mary and Martha. But now Lazarus was dead and had been in the grave for four days. When Jesus came onto the scene, He immediately was surrounded

by unbelief. Martha was quoting Scripture, but didn't believe it. Mary, who had been falling at His feet and listening to His every word, now was falling at his feet in accusation. Even the people around were questioning, *"Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"* (v. 37). All of this left Jesus groaning in the Spirit so intensely that the writer John took note of it.

Then the Scripture says, "Jesus wept!" The people misunderstood His tears and said, "Oh, how He loved Lazarus." But it wasn't about Lazarus. I believe He wept when He looked down through the corridors of time and saw that multitudes were going to die in their sin when they could have had eternal life. Multitudes were going to make the wrong choice and let the stone of death cover their hearts and eyes, when Christ Himself was in their midst with only one passion in His heart—to call life out of death. That's why He was a Man of sorrows, for He saw people throughout the ages who just would not believe God was willing to do something miraculous for them. Even today we must believe He can call us out of every place of death. We must believe there is not a gravestone that can hold us. There is nowhere He cannot reach, no bondage He cannot break.

■ SORROWFUL EVEN UNTO DEATH

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to His disciples, *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"* (Matthew 26:38). There was sorrow because He was going to be separated from His Father and pay the price for our sin. We can never understand the depth of this—Jesus had never been separated from His Father. How does God separate Himself from Himself? It's unfathomable. And now suddenly the Father was going to withdraw His hand and turn His back on

Jesus. This is the deep sorrow of the cross. However, part of His sorrow must have gone beyond the pain and separation of the cross. I believe Jesus saw a time when those who failed to understand the love of God would choose not to part ways with their sin but instead would remain living in darkness.

"My soul is sorrowful unto death. I am going to the cross to pay the price for the sins of all humanity because I passionately love all those created in the image of God, and I want them back. But I see a time when people will be just like Adam. They will choose a phony covering, stay and live in the wrong places, not coming clean with God. And one day they will finally stand in the presence of the all-consuming love of God, only to be released forever to the place they had freely chosen."

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That is what is going to make hell, hell. Sinners are going to stand in the presence of God, where finally all eyes will be open, all ears will hear, and all hearts will explode with an understanding of how much God loved them—how much He wanted to do for them, how much freedom He wanted to give. The love of God will be the purest thing they have ever seen or experienced. Their hearts will cry, "Oh God, I want to stay in this presence. I want to experience the love of God for eternity!" Yet they will discover they already made the choice.

When given the choice, they chose darkness. When given the chance for freedom, they chose imprisonment. Many tried to cover it all by going to church; by singing a hymn or two

on Sunday morning. Yet they never truly made the break from sin; never came to freedom. They just stayed in the grave and said, "Well, maybe this will be enough. Maybe just hearing His voice is good enough. Maybe I really don't have to get up and come out of this place of death and walk toward Him." They neglected the warning of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11: *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."*

On that day, those who continued in such practices will realize that God is not sending them to hell—rather, they chose hell. The choice is freely given, but it is given here, not there. Yes, one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, but it will be too late for many. Even people who might have worn religious garments in various occupations in the ministry will bend their knee and confess with their tongue, but it will be too late.

■ ESTEEMED HIM NOT

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:3). Think about the multitudes who will have this as their testimony forever. "He called to us, just as He called to Adam, but we hid our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. We did not consider Him valuable enough to step out of darkness and into the light of His love. We didn't really believe He was the Son of God, the only way to eternal life, and one worth giving our all to." Or it could be that they acknowledged Him, would speak about Him occasionally, and

if somebody asked, “Do you believe Jesus is God?” they would reply, “Yes!” But they did not esteem Him. *“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”* (Isaiah 53:4). Consider this in regard to those who reject the love of God. With His stripes they could have been healed. That’s really what it boils down to in the end. Some will lament for all eternity, “I could have been healed. I could have had my sin forgiven and walked in newness of life. Heaven could have been mine. I now understand there is no way I could have earned it, because I have stood in His love. I now see He only required me to acknowledge my sin and receive His love. I finally understand that He went to a cross and was beaten, despised and rejected—all for me. He took all my punishment, all my past, all my failing, all my struggling. He took upon Himself everything I ever did and nailed it to the cross. And He did all this so that I might be clean; so that He could come live inside me and change me from the inside out.”

■ A BETTER TESTIMONY

But there will be another group—those who will be able to say, “He was despised and rejected of men, but not by me. He was a Man of sorrows, but I understood the sorrow was because He loved me and wanted me home. I did not hide my face from Him, I did not despise Him, and I did not lightly esteem Him. I opened my heart, giving Him the legitimate right to my life. I believed He truly

had borne my griefs and carried my sorrows—and I knew I was not meant to carry them anymore. What needed to be done that I might be reconciled to God was put upon Him, and by His stripes, I was healed!”

It is not about us, not about having gone to church, not about all our good works.

That will be our testimony for all eternity, for it is not about us, not about having gone to church, not about all our good works. By His stripes we are healed! No plea bargaining will be necessary to get into heaven, for the price was already fully paid. All we need today is the courage to come to God in a generation that lightly esteems Him—to give Him our heart, and to trust Him for the power to live a new life. What rejoicing enters the heart of those who make this choice now, even on this side of eternity, knowing that on the other side awaits a fuller, richer, more complete experience of this indescribable love of God. Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
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CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Prayer Meeting	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	

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